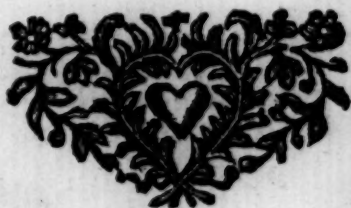


THE
ENGLISHMAN

Directed in the
CHOICE of his Religion.



THE SECOND EDITION, Corrected.

L O N D O N :

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SECT. I.

T cannot be denied, that most People have their Religion not so much from Choice as from Chance; because it happened to be the Religion of the Country where they were born and bred; or because their Parents and first Instructors instilled into their Minds the same Principles which they had embraced themselves. But when they are grown up to Years

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of Understanding, it is highly fitting that they should examine for themselves, and see into the Grounds and Reasons upon which they have been taught in this or that Manner to believe. Truth fears no Examination, and desires only to have a fair and impartial Tryal; and no Man that professes himself to be guided by Reason, will refuse to hear Reason, on which Side soever it is offer'd. If he finds what he had been taught in his early Years to be conformable to Truth, he will more steadily adhere to it, and think it a Happiness that he was so soon acquainted with it. If, upon better Enquiry, he discovers himself to have been brought up in an Error, he will not be difficult to part with it, and to take the right and surest Way to his eternal Happiness.

IT is with this View that the following Discourse of Religion is made publick, namely to be assisting to those who are willing to make a rational Enquiry into Things, and to be set right in the Religion which they should live and

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and die in, that they might not be as Children, tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine.

THE Questions I shall propose, and to which I shall endeavour to give a satisfactory Answer, are these :

First, WHY it is necessary to be of any Religion at all ?

Secondly, WHY we are and ought to be of the Christian Religion, rather than of any other that has prevail'd in the World.

Thirdly, BECAUSE amongst Christians there are Divisions ; and the most considerable, in these western Parts of the World, is that of the Protestants and Papists ; whether we should be in the Number of the former, or of the latter ?

Fourthly, BECAUSE here in *England* the Protestants themselves are of different Minds, some keeping to the

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establiſh'd Church, others ſeparating
from it; whether we ſhould chuſe ei-
ther to be Churchmen or Diſſenters?

S E C T. II.

TH E R E being too many amongſt
us who talk and act, as if they
had no Religion, the firſt Queſtion I
propoſ'd to be conſider'd was this :

W H Y it is neceſſary for us to be
of any Religion at all?

I A N S W E R, Becauſe there is a
God. For Religion is nothing elſe but
the Honour and Worſhip we pay to
God: And whoſoever is perſwaded in
his Mind, that there is ſuch a Being,
cannot but look upon himſelf bound to
yield him the higheſt Teſtimonies of his
Honour and Reſpect.

W H E N

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W H E N we speak of God, we mean by that Name the Highest and most Perfect of all Beings, Him who formed the World, and all Things in it; by whose infinite Power and Wisdom the Universe is govern'd, and on whom all the Creatures depend for their Life and continual Support. To such a Being as this, so exceedingly great and good, all that have any Sense of him, or are capable of understanding their Obligations to him, must own their Reverence and Worship to be due, and that 'tis reasonable for them to live in Subjection to his Laws. This is what we mean by Religion.

I F it be asked, Upon what Grounds we believe and are perswaded there is a God?

W E answer, The Frame of the World in general; the Frame of our own Natures in particular; the Voice of all Nations; and the Voice of our

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own Consciences, plainly declare that there is and must be such a Being.

I. THE Frame of the World in general evidently shews it: For how was it possible that so large and beautiful a World could ever come into Being, its Parts ranged in so excellent an Order, all its Motions so admirably adjusted, without the Contrivance of a most wise and powerful Being, such as we mean by the Name and Title of God? A Man may as well believe, when he sees a fair and stately Building, that it rose without Hands, or when he sees an Engine performing all its Motions with Exactness, that no Workman had the Contrivance of it, as that this World was not made and put in Motion by infinite Counsel and Wisdom. It is not surely at Random, or by any Knowledge and Will of their own, that the Sun, Moon, and Stars, hold on their Courses; the Year brings round its Seasons; the Sea observes its Ebbs and Flows; the Earth produces its various Fruits; and the Animals are taught to provide
for

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for themselves and their Young. These and Thousands of other Instances, even all the Works of Nature, shew that there is a supreme over-ruling Power, who first set in order the Course of the World, and assigned to each Being its proper Station and Business, and does not fail to maintain and preserve that most wise Order he has established amongst them.

2. THE Frame of our own Natures, in particular, teaches and assures us of the same weighty Truth: For we see and esteem it to be our Happiness, that we *understand more than the Beasts of the Earth, and are made wiser than the Fowls of Heaven.*

BUT wherein is it that this superior Wisdom of ours does appear? how does the Excellency of our Understanding shew itself? Chiefly in this; That we have a Sense and Knowledge of the God that made us. The Creatures below us are perfectly ignorant of him; have not the least Sense of a Deity, or

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Inclination to worship him: But Man is by Nature form'd a religious Animal, born to look upward to the mighty Author of his Being, having Capacities for, and a Disposition to worship him: And unless we can suppose that such a Propensity was planted in us perfectly in vain, we must be convinc'd of the Being of a God who hath framed us thus, and hereby distinguish'd us from the Beasts that perish.

3. To this agrees the general Voice of Mankind, all Nations universally consenting in this Perswasion. For howsoever they may differ in other Things, in Laws, in Manners, or in the Forms of Religion, in this they have constantly agreed, that there is and must be a God, to whom religious Worship is due. It is true, they have fallen into great Errors and Superstitions in this Point, some believing in a Multitude of Gods, and bowing themselves down to Stocks and Stones; others entertaining very odd and extravagant Conceits about him: But that there is a Sovereign Being

Being whom they are obliged to worship, has been the constant Belief of all Nations and Ages. And if one or two particular Persons have at any Time sprung up, who have seemed to question this Truth, they have been condemned, and abhorr'd as Monsters in Nature. Which shews, that God has either made some Discoveries of himself to the World, however they may have been forgotten and neglected, or that he has interwoven in our very Natures a Sense of Religion.

4. THE Voice of a Man's own Conscience, if he will but listen to it, will clearly satisfy him that there is a holy and righteous God, to whom he must be accountable. He plainly perceives that he has a natural Sense of Good and Evil; that there is a Law within him, which tells him some Things he ought to do, other Things he ought to avoid; those are virtuous and commendable, these are vicious and blame-worthy: According to which Distinction, as he frames and orders his Actions, his own

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Mind is ready to applaud or condemn him. This Judgment which a Man passes upon himself, or the Sense he has of his own well or evil Doings, is what we mean by Conscience; the Force and Power whereof all Persons of all Ranks and Conditions have been ready to acknowledge. To possess a clear and quiet Conscience, not stung with the Guilt of any great and flagrant Wickedness, has been always reckon'd the firmest Ground of Comfort: On the contrary, the Remorse and Lashes of an evil Conscience, were by the Heathens judged to be a Torment insupportable. Which shews how vain and ridiculous is the Talk of those who have given out Religion to be only a State-Device, to keep the World in awe; when as Statesmen themselves, yea, and the mightiest Kings, have been equally liable to the Terrors of Conscience, with the meanest of their Subjects. And what do these Admonitions and Bodings of Conscience mean? what were they intended to teach us, but this? *viz.* That there is most certainly an Almighty Being, whose

whose Servants we are, whose Laws we must obey ; and if we will not, but live altogether in a Neglect of him, and allow ourselves in those Vices which the Reason he has planted in us does flatly condemn, we must expect one Day to be severely punish'd by him ; and tho' we should escape his Vengeance in this World, we shall dreadfully feel it in the next.

THUS are we taught by the visible Frame of this World, by the Dignity and Excellency of our own Natures, by the Voice of all Nations, and by the Voice of our own Consciences, that there is a High and most Glorious God, *in whom we live, and move, and have our Beings*, and to whom, as we are made capable of doing it, we are to yield our Worship and reasonable Service.

IF it should be ask'd, Why God does not think fit clearly to discover himself to us, so as to put us out of all Doubt, both of his Being, and the Way in which he would be honoured by us?

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To this I answer, and it is a farther Satisfaction to us, That he has from Time to Time made such Revelations of himself, as he saw most proper and fitting; not indeed to all without Distinction, but to Persons of very eminent Piety and Goodness, whom he made choice of to be the Teachers and Instructors of others. Such were *Moses* and the Prophets under the Old Testament, Jesus and his Apostles under the New; who (as will be shewn in due Place) gave ample Assurance to the World, that what they taught was immediately communicated to them from Above, and that God by them declared his Will and Pleasure unto Men. And it gives us a solid Joy and Comfort in believing, that we hear God speaking to us in those sacred Books which his Prophets and extraordinary Embassadors left behind them. So that altho' God does not visibly appear to Men, nor indeed in this mortal State were we able to bear it, yet has he manifested himself in such a Manner to us, as to leave

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us in no Uncertainty, what we are to believe, or what we are to do, in order to the Attainment of everlasting Life.

THIS then may suffice to have been spoken on the first Question propounded, viz. Why it is necessary for us to be of some Religion, or other? The Reason is, because there is a God, to whom our religious Veneration is due. Were there indeed no such Being, as the Atheist vainly dreams, or is willing to hope, then should we have no occasion to trouble our selves about Religion: But unless Mankind should become another Sort of Creatures, and should have no higher Sentiments than the poor Brutes, they will still be inclin'd to acknowledge and worship the Deity.

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

BUT supposing it necessary to be of some Religion, it may be demanded,

Secondly, W H Y we are and ought to be of the Christian Religion, rather than of any other that has prevail'd in the World?

T H E Answer is, Because the Christian Religion came from God; and was intended by him to be the Religion of all Nations, even unto the End of the World: So that no Religion contrary to it, or different from it, is to be receiv'd. Here then it will be necessary to shew,

I. W H A T Reason we have to believe that the Christian Religion came from God.

II. How

II. How it appears that it was design'd by him to be the Religion of all Nations, even unto the End of the World.

I. WHAT Reason we have to believe that the Christian Religion came from God. Now the Reason why we thus believe, is, because he who was the Author and Teacher of this Religion, gave the clearest Demonstrations that he was sent by God for the Instruction of the World. This he shewed,

I. BY the Miracles he wrought; doing such and so great Things, *as none could possibly have done, unless God had been with him.* The Miracles which Jesus did, were not such as tended only to the Amusement of People, or to work in them a present Wonder and Astonishment, but they were wrought in Compassion to the Miseries of Mankind; and the Relief they gave was instantly *felt*, and *long* enjoy'd. So did he cause the Blind to see, the
Deaf

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Deaf to hear, the Dumb to speak, and the Lame to walk; sometimes using no Means at all; at other Times such as were next to none, being no wise equal to the Effect; generally, he spake the Word only, and the Distempers immediately fled: With a few Loaves, and two or three small Fishes he fed and satisfied the Hunger of many Thousands: And more than once he raised to Life again, Persons known to be dead, that were carrying out to their Burial, yea, one that had lain so long in the Grave, as to be thought corrupted.

His Miracles were many and various, great and amazing, salutary and most beneficial; which he performed not privately and in a Corner, but in the Sight of Multitudes, that were daily following him, and receiving Good from him. Last of all, to shew by whose Commission he acted, and whose chosen Minister he was, on the third Day after he suffer'd Death, God raised him out of the Grave; and after some Days Continuance here upon Earth, he took him

him up in a bright Cloud into Heaven. Such was the Person who first taught the Christian Religion; of whom, if the Account now given be to be depended upon, no one, I think, can make the least Question, but the Doctrine he taught certainly came from God. The same appears,

2. FROM the Prophecies that for many Ages before were given concerning the Coming of this excellent Person; and what he was to do, to teach, and to suffer; which were all exactly fulfilled in him, and never were fulfilled in any other.

THE Books of the Old Testament had been long in the Hands of the *Jews*, and were so well known to contain clear Predictions of a great Prophet and Messenger of God, whom they called by the Name of *Messiah*, or *Christ*, that the whole *Jewish* Nation were in a constant Expectation of him; and the Remains of that People, who will not acknowledge our *Jesus* to have been Him, continue

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tinue to expect him still. But nothing can be more plain to an unprejudiced Person, that will but give himself Leave to look into their Books, than that the Time, within which the Messiah was to appear, is past long ago; and that at that very Time, which had been pre-signified by the Prophets, and when the *Jewish* Nation were in a full Expectation of him, then did our Lord Jesus shew himself to the World, a Teacher of Righteousness; who appears to have sprung out of the same Tribe, out of the same Family, and to have been born in the very Place, where the Messiah was to make his Entry into the World. And whosoever will but read and observe, how punctually every Circumstance of his Sufferings and Death, had been foretold by the antient Scriptures, will see abundant Reason to conclude, both that our Lord Jesus was the true Messiah, and that the Books which prophesied of him, were truly Oracles of God.

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IT might seem indeed strange that the *Jews* themselves should have overlooked the Meaning of their own Prophecies, and not to have acknowledged him, to whom they did so plainly refer.

THIS, I say, might seem strange, had not their own Prophets also signified, how fatal a Blindness should seize upon the *Jewish* Nation, by the just Judgment of God for their many and provoking Impieties: How they should have Eyes, but see not; Ears, and hear not; an Understanding, and not perceive.—When this Veil, which yet remains upon them, is to be taken away, must be left to the unsearchable Wisdom of God.

THUS may we be satisfied from the twofold strong Testimony given to it from above, *viz.* Prophecy and Miracles, that the Christian Religion certainly came from God, or that the Doctrine taught by Christ and his Apostles

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is to be received by us, as the Declaration of God's Mind and Will to the World.

S E C T. IV.

IF it should be asked, How we can depend on the Account that is given us of the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles? I answer, The Event plainly shews it to be true. For how otherwise could the Christian Religion ever have prevailed, or gained any Credit in the World? Was it possible that any of the *Jewish* Nation should become Christians (as many of them did) had they not been satisfied, that what Jesus was reported to have done amongst them, was real Fact? had they not seen, or understood from unquestionable Hands, the Miracles he wrought in his Life-time, and the Wonders that happen'd at his Death? Could the *Gentiles* have ever been persuaded to throw aside
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the Religion of their Ancestors, out of Respect to one that had been crucified, had not those who preached him, given the clearest Marks of that divine Authority and Power, by which they proclaimed him to be the Lord of Life and Glory? In a Word, a Man might as soon believe, that twelve naked and unarmed Persons could have conquer'd the World, as that the Apostles could have spread Christianity so far and wide as they did, without the Power of God visibly attending them, had they not made it plainly appear by the Signs they wrought for Men's Conviction, that their Doctrine was indeed from above. If they had intended only to amuse the World with a Fiction, they would have framed their Story of Things done a long Time ago, in some Age that had been pass'd; which yet, had they never before been heard of, they would have found it a difficult Matter to persuade any one to believe; but to tell the Generation then living, that Jesus their Master had shewn himself among them to be an extraordinary Prophet

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Prophet and Minister of Heaven, by a great Variety of Wonders publickly done in those Days, supposing them *not* to have been done, how wild and extravagant must it needs have appear'd to all! And where could they have found any so weak as to hearken to their Story? But in appealing thus to the Sense and Knowledge of the present Age, they shewed how well assured they were of the Truth of all they had said and written, how little they feared any Examination and Enquiry; and to give a lasting Evidence of their honest and upright Meaning, they sealed their Testimony with their Blood, dying in and for the sake of those Truths, and of that Religion they had deliver'd to the World.

To what has been said, I might add a more inward Sort of Evidence, contained in the Doctrine of Christianity itself; the Nature and Genius whereof shew plainly enough from whence it had its Original. For where shall we see so rational an Account given of the
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Nature and Perfections of God, of the State and Condition of Man, as in the Christian Institutions? Where may we find the Method of atoning and making God reconcileable to us, taught in a Manner so fully answering to all our Needs and Expectations? Where shall we find Morality carried to so high a Degree of Perfection? Precepts of Virtue so holy, righteous, and good? From whence can we derive so solid a Ground of Contentment and Peace? so just a Contempt of this empty and transient World? so reasonable and lively Hope of a better? Surely a Religion so full of excellent Instruction, discountenancing all Appearance of Evil, recommending every Thing that is worthy and good, setting before us a Prospect so encouraging our Hopes, so awakening our Fears, cannot well be thought to have any other than God for its Author, having all the Properties and Marks that could be look'd for in a Religion coming from Heaven.

W H A T has been said, may, I hope, suffice to confirm us in a settled Belief and Assurance, that Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, was indeed a Teacher sent from God; and that the Doctrine taught by him, and his Apostles, was no other than the Signification of God's Mind and Pleasure; the which we must observe, and act accordingly, if we desire to be happy. And if this Doctrine or Religion be indeed from God, we may soon determine what Judgment we are to make of any other Religions, which are contrary to, or differ from the Christian, *viz.* that they are not true; and that we must not receive, or be Followers of them. Errors may be numberless; but Truth is but one; and all Deviations from it are carefully to be avoided. But I propose in the following Sections, to consider the several Religions that stand in Opposition to Christianity, and to shew upon what Grounds they are to be rejected.

IN the mean Time let us briefly reflect upon what has been already deliver'd. From whence we may see;

1. THE extravagant Folly and Mad-ness of those who live in the Contempt of all Religion in general. For as sure as there is a God, it is necessary for a Man to be of some Religion, in some Way or other to honour and worship his Maker. He that does it not, is far worse than a Turk, or a Heathen, who in their several Ways express their religious Apprehensions, and have their Times and Places for their solemn Worship. The Atheist, or Neglector of all Worship, would be abhor'd in every Nation under Heaven; and how prodigious is it, that any such should be found amongst Christians! Therefore,

2. As we call ourselves so, and profess ourselves to live under the best of Religions, we should be truly thankful for the Blessing we enjoy, and take Care to live answerable to it; in a regular

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Performance of our Duty towards God, in observing Justice and Equity towards Men, and maintaining a due Government over our Appetites and Passions. If we are altogether disregardful of the Rules of Christianity, in vain do we take the Name of Christ upon us; the best of Religions will no wise avail those who never mind it, or care not to be govern'd by it.



SECT.

S E C T. V.

TH E Reason above given, why we should be of the Christian Religion, rather than of any other that has prevail'd in the World, was this, namely, Because the Christian Religion came from God, and was designed by him to be the Religion of all Nations; so that no Religion contrary to it, or different from it, is to be received.

How and upon what Grounds we believe that it came from God, has been already consider'd.

BUT before I proceed to examine into the several Religions different from the Christian, it will be necessary to clear up the latter Part of the Answer, and to shew how it does appear

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that God intended Christianity to be the Religion of all Nations, even to the End of the World.

FOR this we must take the Words of those who were the first Preachers of it. I mean the Apostles of our Lord Jesus.

FOR, if they, like their Master, confirmed their Doctrine with Miracles; if God was with them in all that they taught and did; then are they to be believed in whatsoever they have said and written for the Instruction of the World.

Now in their Books, which they left behind them for the standing Benefit and Instruction of the Churches, they frequently declare that Christianity was the last and most perfect Revelation of his Mind and Will, which God intended to make to the World, after which no other is to be expected: Consequently, no Pretences of any new Doctors are to be hearken'd to; the Gospel

Gospel already given is to be the only Rule of our Faith and Practice.

THE Commission given by Christ to his Apostles, evidently shews, that the Religion they taught was to be universal, not intended (like that of the Jews) for the Use of any single Nation or People, but of all the Nations upon the Earth. So were they commanded by their Lord, *To go abroad, and to teach*, or make Disciples of *All Nations*. In Pursuance of this Charge, they readily dispersed themselves into the several Regions of the World, preaching the Gospel in all Countries where they travell'd, and converting Multitudes of People to the Christian Faith; making so great a Progress in the Work, that St Paul could say in his Time, *That their Sound was gone out into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.*

IF it be said, that notwithstanding the Labours and Preaching of the Apostles, great Numbers every where re-

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main'd Infidels; and many Nations, where the Gospel had been planted by them, have since returned to their old State of Heathenism, or embraced a Religion very different from Christianity.

THIS is no sufficient Objection to what was before alledged, *viz.* that the Christian Religion was intended to be the general Religion of the World. For it is too evident, that the gracious Intentions of God for the Good of Mankind may be defeated by Men's own perverse and ungrateful Behaviour. He calls upon Sinners to repent, and has declar'd himself *to have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked*; but notwithstanding this, many, even the far greatest Part, will continue impenitent and wicked, and be doom'd to the Pains of eternal Death. In like manner, the Gospel was intended as a Blessing to the whole World, and the Apostles were employ'd to publish it among all Nations; but they were impower'd only to persuade and convince,
not

not to force and compel; and though many became their Converts, it is no Wonder at all, if a great many others having no Regard to God and Religion, and totally immers'd in the Affairs and Pursuits of the World, gave no Heed at all to them or their Doctrine.

AND in the Nations where the Gospel was once well settled, God did not think fit absolutely to constrain Men to live in Obedience to it, or to put it out of their Power, by any gross Neglect, or Fault of their own, to make a Forfeiture of so excellent a Privilege. They might, if they were not watchful, lay themselves open to Errors and Delusions; and falling into unnecessary Quarrels and Contentions, might render themselves an easy Prey to a barbarous Enemy: Such has been the Fate of many Christian Nations formerly; and who knows what Calamities may happen to ourselves, if our Impieties and Vices, our Quarrels and Divisions, should provoke God to withdraw his

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Protection from us; if we endeavour not to live more worthy of the Religion we profess? But it is no Impeachment of the Goodness of God, that Men too often abuse it, and are punish'd for such Abuse; nor is it any Argument against the Christian Religion, that although it was design'd for the Benefit of all Nations, all will not receive or be govern'd by it. And if there should appear to us Difficulties in the Administrations of divine Providence, that we know not with our best Reason how to resolve, we must remember that God is infinitely above us, *wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in working, whose Judgments are unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out.*

As the Christian Religion was design'd to be universal, it appears to be the last and most perfect Revelation of his Mind and Will, which God intended to make to the World; after which no other is to be expected. Whatever Laws or Significations of his Pleasure God gave in former Ages; when he
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sent his Son Christ Jesus into the World, it was his Will and Command that Men should hearken to him above all other Prophets and Ministers that went before him: So he declared by a Voice from Heaven, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* Not without Reason therefore did Christ say of himself, *John xiv. 6. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no Man cometh to the Father but by me.* The Apostle to the *Hebrews* thus begins his Epistle, *God who at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, spake in Time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken unto us by his Son:* And the Instructions which he has deliver'd by so eminent a Minister, by a Person so near and dear to himself, we may well conclude to be of the highest Importance, and to excel all the Laws and Institutions, which in any preceding Age had been given to the World. It is no less plain from what the Apostles say of it, that after the Christian Religion once reveal'd, no other Form of Religion or Doc-

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trine was to be expected from Heaven, as long as the World lasts. The Gospel which the Apostles preach'd and publish'd through the Nations, was to be the standing Rule by which Men were thence forward to govern themselves: No new Truths not taught therein are to be believ'd as *reveal'd* by God; no new Laws different from, or contrary to those therein contain'd are to be observ'd, as of any *Necessity* to recommend us to the Favour of God; yea, if any should pretend to any new Revelations, or endeavour to impose upon the World any other Doctrines, we are required absolutely to reject them, a Curse being pronounced upon those who should in any After-time make such an Attempt. So did St *Paul* openly declare, *Gal. i. 8. Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, should preach any other Gospel than what has been already preached, let him be accursed*: Which to make the greater Impression, and the more earnestly to caution us against the giving Ear to any Impostors, he repeats in the very next Verse, doubling the Admonition,

nition, to put us more upon our Guard; *As I said before, so say I now again, If any Man preach any other Gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* Seeing therefore the Religion taught by the Apostles of Christ was so abundantly confirm'd by the Miracles God wrought in its Favour; seeing it was publish'd through the Nations of the World, to be by *All* receiv'd; seeing no new Gospel or Revelation from God is to be expected, but all Pretences to it are to be rejected with a Curse; it appears very plain, why we are and ought to be of the Christian Religion, rather than any other that has prevailed in the World.



S E C T. VI.

BUT because there formerly were, and still are in being, other Religions different from Christianity, it may be convenient, for the farther strengthening of our Faith, to take a brief Survey of them, and to shew upon what particular Reasons each of them is to be rejected by us.

THE Religions which, besides the Christian, have been and are now in the World, are these three, *viz.* the *Jewish* Religion, the Heathen Religion, and that which the *Turks*, and other Eastern People have embrac'd, *viz.* the Mahometan.

As to the first, we do not deny that it came from God, who, by the Hands of his Servant *Moses*, deliver'd to the People of *Israel* a Law, or Body of Laws,

Laws, instructing them in all Matters pertaining to his own Worship, and in all the Duties of Justice and Equity they were to perform to each other.

THIS Law was deliver'd in so solemn a Manner from Mount *Sinai*, where God shewed himself present by a terrible Pomp and Majesty, that the People could be under no Doubt from whom it proceeded: And *Moses* had wrought so many Wonders in the Face of the whole Nation, that they could not but be satisfied whose Minister he was, and that the Religion taught by him was to be received with the greatest Veneration. But this Religion, although of divine Original, we cannot now be of, for these two Reasons.

I. BECAUSE it was not intended for the Religion of all Nations, being only given to the Nation of the *Jews*; as the Psalmist says, *God dealt not so with any other Nation, neither had the Heathen Knowledge of his Laws.* Accordingly, we do not read of any Apostles
or

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or extraordinary Ministers sent forth to publish it to the rest of the World, and to make Converts of other Nations to the same.

2. ANOTHER Reason why we cannot be of the *Jewish* Religion, and why even the *Jews* themselves should no longer adhere to it, is, because it appears to have been only given for a Time, till the great Messiah or Christ should come, when it was to give Place to the Doctrine or Religion taught by him. *Moses* himself foretold of a great Prophet that should in due Time come into the World, who, like himself, should be a Lawgiver to the People, and was in all Things to be hearken'd to: Of this we find *St Peter* putting his Countrymen, the *Jews*, in Mind, *Acts* iii. 22. *For Moses truly spake unto our Fathers, The Lord your God shall raise up from among your Brethren, a Prophet like unto me; him shall ye hear in all Things, whatsoever he shall say unto you:* Which he applies to *Jesus* our Lord, as he speaks in the last Verse of that

in the Choice of his Religion. 41

that Chapter; *Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his Iniquities.* If now (as we have shewn) the Apostles are to be believ'd in all they have said and taught, there is nothing more clear from their Writings, than that upon the Revelation of the Gospel, the Law of *Moses* was out-dated, no longer to bind even the *Jews* themselves, except in such Precepts as were binding to all Mankind before that Law was given, and are of natural and perpetual Obligation; but the whole Frame of that Law, respecting the Service of the Tabernacle and Temple, with the Rites and Ceremonies therein prescribed, was to be dissolv'd, and to cease upon the Introduction of that new and better Form of Religion taught by Christ and his Apostles; wherefore is our Lord Jesus called *the Mediator of a new Covenant*, in Opposition to the old Covenant established by *Moses*, which as the Apostle says, *stood only in Meats and Drinks, and divers Washings and*
carnal

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carnal Ordinances, and was impos'd on them until the Time of Reformation, until the great Reform made in Religion by Christ the Son of God; since the appearing of whom, All, both Jews and Gentiles, are to expect Justification only by the Faith of him, and Obedience to his Doctrine. Wherefore, (says St Paul to the Jews,) my Brethren, ye also are become dead to the Law by the Body of Christ; for he is our Peace who hath made both one, both Jews and Gentiles one People, and hath broken down the middle Wall of Partition between us; having abolished in his Flesh the Enmity, even the Law of Commandments contained in Ordinances, that he might reconcile both unto God in one Body by the Cross, Eph. ii. 14, 15, 16.

THUS then were the Jews and Gentiles to be united in the same Body of Christ's Church, and to live by the same Law, even that of him who appear'd to be their common Saviour. May God of his infinite Mercy remove

move the Veil lying yet upon the Minds of the *Jews*, and dispose them to be united with us in the Belief of the true and only Messiah!

S E C T. VII.

AS we cannot be of the *Jewish* Religion, we have far more Reason to reject and even abominate that of the Heathen, against which God so often declares both in the Old and New Testament. What sort of Religion was in Use amongst the Heathens, we are told by St Paul, *Rom. i. 21, &c.* where he says, *That they became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darken'd; professing themselves wise they became Fools, and changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image, made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and fourfooted Beasts and creeping Things. They devised to themselves, a Multitude of Gods and*
God.

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Goddeſſes, which they worſhipped under various Forms and Idols, bowing themſelves down, and paying Adoration to the Works of their own Hands. They gave divine Honours, not only to dead Men, who in their Life-time had been infamous for their Vices and Villanies, but they ſtooped to the Worſhip of the baſeſt Creatures; hardly a Beaſt, or a Plant, but by ſome or other was worſhipped for a Deity. And ſuch as their Gods were, ſuch was the Worſhip they paid them; their ſacred Rites full of all Obſcenity and Lewdneſs, and many of them barbarous and cruel; oftentimes ſhedding the Blood of their Sons and Daughters, in Way of Sacrifice to their Idols: So that well might the Scripture aſcribe the Worſhip of the Heathen to the Suggestion of wicked and impure Spirits, declaring it to be the Effect of that tyrannical Power which the Devil had uſurp'd over Mankind. *The Things, (ſays St Paul,) which the Gentiles ſacrifice, they ſacrifice to Devils, and not to God: Therefore was he ſent*
(as

in the Choice of his Religion. 45

(as he declares, *Acts* xxvi. 18.)
to open their Eyes, and to turn them
from Darkneſs unto Light, and from
the Power of Satan unto God: And
for this Purpose (ſays St John) was the
Son of God manifested, that he might de-
ſtroy the Works of the Devil. It is true,
that ſome few amongſt the Heathen
were poſſeſſed with better and more
worthy Thoughts of God and Reli-
gion, and render'd themſelves famous
by their eminent Wiſdom and moral
Inſtructions; but then it muſt be ſaid,
that however they deſpiſed in their
Hearts the Superſtitious of the Vulgar,
they generally in their Practice con-
form'd themſelves to them, leaving it
uncertain to judge, whether their Cou-
rage or Sincerity were moſt to be que-
ſtion'd.

NOR were it hard to ſhew, that the
moſt celebrated Precepts of Morality
amongſt the Heathen were chiefly de-
riv'd from the holy Scriptures, and that
ſome of their beſt Writers in that kind
borrowed their Notions from the Doc-
trine

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trine of Christianity. Hence is it that *Simplicius*, and others, so far refined upon the Philosophers that went before them. But to proceed.

S E C T. VIII.

TH E R E is another Religion, which has sprung up since Christianity was reveal'd, and has made a great Noise in other Parts of the World, viz. the Mahometan, or the Religion taught by *Mahomet*, or *Mohammed*, the admired Prophet of the *Turks*. There being no great Danger that any of us should be perverted to it, I shall have the less Occasion to speak much of it; but something may be proper briefly to be mentioned, in order to shew how little Credit is to be given thereto.

I. T H E N

1. THEN it may be observ'd, that *Mahomet* himself acknowledged Christ to be a great Prophet and Minister of God; and his Followers condemn the *Jews* for their base Treatment of him: But now, from Christ and his Apostles Men are taught to reject any Person that should come with any new Doctrine different from, or contrary to the Gospel by them reveal'd, as was shewn before; so that if Christ were a true Prophet, *Mahomet* must be a false one.

2. THE pretended Prophet *Mahomet* wrought no Miracles to shew his Commission from above, but only impudently averr'd (what every Impostor might do) that he was sent a Teacher from God, and the World must at their Peril receive him.

3. *Mahomet* establish'd his Religion in Rebellion, revolting from his lawful Civil Governours, and carried it on merely by the Power of the Sword; contrary

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contrary to the Laws and mild Institution of our Saviour Christ, who taught his Apostles to win over others to the Faith, only by Meekness, Patience, and an exemplary Virtue, join'd with a Power of working all Sorts of Miracles for Mens Conviction.

4. As the Mahometan Religion was at first propagated, so is it still supported by the Sword; gaining no Footing in any Christian Country, not subdued by its Arms, although in all Parts of the Mahometan Dominions Christianity, however oppress'd, keeps its Footing still.

5. WHOEVER were to compare the Doctrine and Laws of Christianity with those deliver'd by *Mahomet*, would soon be satisfied, which of the two has the justest Pretensions to a divine Original. The many absurd and ridiculous Stories told by that bold Impostor, his Multitude of Wives, and the like Liberty allowed to his Followers, his low and sensual Notions of the
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the Happiness of Heaven, and the like, are enough to persuade any rational and considerate Person to reject a Religion so little making for the Honour of God, so adapted to the Passions and Vices of Men.

AND yet this Religion, absurd and foolish as it is, has by the unsearchable Providence of God been suffer'd greatly to prevail, and that too in Countries, where once Christianity mightily flourished; to shew, that God does not tie himself to secure and protect People in the Possession of the best of Religions, if they do not take care to live worthy of it; and that the Light of his heavenly Truth, unregarded and abused, may, by a just Judgment, be withdrawn, Ignorance and Barbarism succeeding in its Room.

BUT there are some good Lessons which Christians may learn even from the Mahometans and Heathens, *viz.* That to neglect the Worship of God, is abominable in the Eyes of all the
C Religions

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Religions that are in the World. The idolatrous Heathens had their Temples and Places of Worship, to which they constantly repair'd: The *Turks* also have their Mosques, or Temples, to which they are daily called to offer up their Prayers, and are observ'd to do it with much Reverence and Devotion. Is it not then a great Shame to us Christians, if we are found to have less Piety, and to be less mindful of our Duty to God, than are these poor deluded People? Or is not that Christian much worse than a Heathen, that can contentedly sit at Home, and seldom appears at the House of God? Again,

THE Heathens, the *Turks*, and the savage *Indians*, have a Sense of moral Honesty among them, and are observed to be fair and upright in their Dealings; and will not all these rise up in Judgment against, and sorely condemn many that call themselves Christians, who are so ready to shuffle and cheat, and to use all the little knavish Arts to enrich

enrich themselves? Yea, is it not owing to this, that Christianity has had no better Effect, and made so little Progress in the Heathen Countries to which we have traded, and which have been discourag'd from becoming Converts to it, by the Immoralities and unjust Actions of those who profess it? Our Saviour has told us, that *if our Righteousness exceeds not the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: What then may we expect, if our Righteousness does not exceed, if it does not come up to the Righteousness of the poor Heathen? May a due Sense hereof incline us to be honest and good Men, least while we pretend to the best of Religions, we make ourselves the most miserable of all the People under Heaven.

S E C T. IX.

HAVING shewn why it is necessary for us to be of some Religion, and why we are and ought to be of the Christian Religion, rather than of any other that has prevail'd in the World, I proceed to the

THIRD Query proposed, which was this: Whereas amongst Christians there are Divisions, and the most considerable in these Western Parts of the World, is that of the Protestants and Papists; whether we should be in the Number of the former, or of the latter?

EVERY well dispos'd Mind cannot but be deeply affected at the Thoughts
of

of those unhappy Differences which he observes among Christians, and might be tempted to fear, that God has abandon'd the Care of his Church, which he sees to be so miserably rent and disorder'd: But in judging thus he would be extremely mistaken. It is no Argument that God neglects the Care of his Church, because he suffers Divisions in it, no more than it is an Argument that he does not govern the World, because he suffers Sin and Wickedness to be acted therein.

IN both Cases his Providence and Method of Government is the same: He has declar'd his Hatred against Sin, and has threaten'd severely to punish those who go on wilfully to commit it, but yet he does not think fit to lay an absolute Restraint upon Mens Wills, but leaves them at the present to their own Devices, intending hereafter to call them to an Account. In like manner he has signified unto Christians, by his Apostle, 1. Cor. i. 10. that *they should all speak the same Thing,*

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and that there be no Divisions among them, but that they be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment: But yet he does not think fit violently to controul Mens peevish Humours and Passions, but suffers them to run into Divisions, if they dare do it, intending one Day to judge them for this and all other their disorderly Actions. And we have the less Reason to be moved at these Things, because our Saviour and his Apostles foretold from the Beginning, that thus it would happen, and that it was hardly possible it should be otherwise, under the general Depravation of human Nature, and amidst the different Tempers, Judgments, and Passions of Men. Offences must needs come, says our Lord; and, says his Apostle, There must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you. 1 Cor. xi. 19.

THE only Care that we should have in this Matter, is to see that we are in the Number of those Christians, who
keep

keep closest to the Doctrines and Rules of our blessed Saviour; that we hold to that Church, in which his Religion is most soundly taught, and his Commandments most faithfully observ'd; avoiding all those Errors and Practices that are contrary to that Form of Doctrine, and the Orders which by himself and his Apostles he has deliver'd to us.

SEEING then, as was said, the Protestants and Papists are the two most considerable Bodies of Christians in these Western Parts of the World, I shall now proceed to shew, why we should choose to be in the Number of the former, rather than that of the latter.

AND the first Reason I shall give is this, *viz.* Because the Protestants endeavour to preserve to all Christian Churches and States the Rights and Privileges which by the Laws of Christ belong to them; whereas the Papists yield them up into the Hands of the

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Pope, vesting him with a boundless Power over all the Churches and Kingdoms of the World. They may say, perhaps, that they mean only in Spirituals; but it is too plain, that they have pleaded for it also in Temporals, and a great many Princes have felt it to their Cost. But supposing it only in Spirituals, or Things pertaining to the Church; where does it appear that Christ ever intended to put the Government of the universal Church into the Hands of any one Man whatsoever? Himself is the Head of it, but where does he speak of his Vicar?

OF any Superiority that St *Peter* had, or did ever claim over the Apostles, the Scripture is silent; the Texts which they have alledg'd in Favour of it, being nothing to the Purpose, as many learned Men of their own have ingenuously confess'd: And supposing *Peter* to have preach'd at *Rome*, or to have presided over the Church at *Rome*, this could not give to the succeeding Bishops of that City any other Power than

than what all Bishops had, who were Successors to the Apostles in the respective Churches, which they planted. In a Word, the Supremacy which the Popes have claim'd over all other Bishops and Churches, is the most groundless, most extravagant, and most arrogant Pretension that was ever advanced in the World: And the Emperor of Germany, the small Remainder of the Roman Grandeur, might with a much better Title pretend to a sovereign Jurisdiction over all the Princes of Europe, than the Pope to a Supremacy over the Churches therein, much less over all the Churches in the World. If it be said, that the Pope's Authority was once submitted to in this Nation of ours; and that for many Years he had the Church and Clergy here under his Government;

WE answer, that the Power he here obtain'd was not by Right, but by Usurpation; therefore in shaking it off, our Princes did no more than restore this Nation to its original Freedom

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and Liberty, putting the Direction of Church Affairs under its own Bishops and Clergy, without depending on any foreign Power whatsoever.

IT was some Ages after the Gospel had been here planted, before the Pope's Jurisdiction was acknowledg'd and receiv'd; and when *Austin* the Monk came over to establish it, the *British* Bishops strenuously opposed him, affirming that this Church had been antiently govern'd by its own Bishops, and that they knew of no Right which any foreign Prelate had to exercise his Authority in this Island. And if the Weakness and Bigottry of some Princes introduc'd this Slavery, the Courage and Wisdom of others very justly threw it out.

S E C T.

S E C T. X.

NOR will any Pretence of the Pope's being antiently Patriarch of the West, or being instrumental in the Conversion of this Island to Christianity, at all avail to support their Claim. A Christian Bishop dwelling in one Country, may send Persons to convert another, without deriving any just Right to himself, or Successors, of being the perpetual Governors of the Churches settled therein; which are to be committed to the Care and Oversight of their own proper Bishops and Pastors. And though formerly the Bishops of some eminent Cities had the Title of Patriarchs conferr'd upon them, who in summoning, or taking Place in Councils, had Precedence and

peculiar Marks of Respect yielded them; this was only from mere human Institution, or by the Favour and Courtesy of Christian Emperors; not from any Superiority which the Laws of Christ gave to one Bishop above another. And whatever Honours or Privileges were conferr'd on those patriarchal Sees, they sunk together with the *Roman* Empire; out of which have since arisen a great many independent States and Kingdoms, which, with the Churches in them, are exempt from any foreign Jurisdiction. From what has been said, it may appear :

1. THAT every Christian Nation has a full Power within itself, to regulate whatsoever is amiss; and if any Errors and Corruptions have been introduc'd, contrary to sound Religion, it may take a proper Course to remove them, without asking Leave of the Pope, or any other foreign Power.

2. WHERE a Nation has reform'd itself, and the Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline

Discipline of its Churches has been settled by a national Act, with the Advice and Consent both of its civil and spiritual Governors, the Subjects of that Nation are bound to submit to the establish'd Order; and whosoever departs from it, breaks the Peace of the Church, and makes himself guilty of Schism. So that the Papists in this Nation, by not conforming themselves to the Church Government, and Worship therein settled, are really chargeable with that Schism which they condemn in others.

3. **THOUGH** the Church of *Rome* were guilty of no Idolatry, and were free from those Errors, both in Doctrine and Practice, which she is accused of, yet neither we nor any other Christian Nation is obliged to receive any Commands or Directions from that Church, or from the Pope its Head. We might then respect her as a Sister Church, but owe our Obedience only to that Church and Government within which the Providence of God has seated us.

S E C T.

S E C T. XI.

BUT besides that the Church of *Rome* has no Authority here, there are other weighty Reasons why we cannot be of the *Romish* Religion, but should live and die in the Protestant Communion, *viz.*

2. BECAUSE the Law of God strictly forbids religious Worship to any Creatures: Whereas the Papists are taught to believe, that such Worship is *due* to them, and accordingly they pay it to Angels, to Saints departed, and especially to the Mother of our Lord, the Virgin *Mary*. Our blessed Saviour has given it in Command to us, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only.*

only. The Psalmist has declar'd God to be the great Object to whom our Prayers are to be directed, where he says, *O thou that bearest Prayer, unto thee shall all Flesh come.* And the setting up other Objects to receive our Prayers and religious Adorations, seems to be a plain Transgression of the first Commandment, *Thou shalt have none other Gods before me.* By which we are requir'd, not only to acknowledge *but one* God, but also not to give the Honour, due properly to him, unto *any other*: This is to have him for our God, and no other with, or besides him.

THE Papists are wont to say in Excuse, that the Prayers which they offer to the Virgin *Mary*, and the Saints, are only to request their charitable Intercession with God for them. But in answer we say,

I. THAT in many of their Forms, they not only request the Saints to pray *for* them, but they petition them directly

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rectly for such Graces and Favours as are proper only to be asked of God, and which none but he can give; as may be seen by looking into their Offices.

2. BY thus mixing with the Service of God, the Service of his Creatures; and in their solemn Worship making their Addresses, sometimes to God, sometimes to the Saints; what is this but to set up other Objects for divine Worship, besides him to whom it is due?

3. SUPPOSING all their Prayers to the Virgin *Mary*, and to Saints and Angels, to mean no more than they would have it believ'd, only to desire their Prayers for them; yet in doing thus, what undue Honours do they pay to his Creatures? how nearly do they make them to resemble their Creator? For either they are supposed to hear and to know the Requests that are made to them, or they do not; if not, they are perfectly vain; if they do, they

they must be (like God himself) all-knowing, and every where present, to hear the Requests that are continually, from all Parts of the World, presented to them by their Votaries: And if this be not to put them in the Place of God, let any one judge. In a Word, to pay this Sort of Worship to either Saint or Angel, is not only no where commanded, but in many Places of Scripture clearly forbidden; therefore with the Protestants, we have justly laid it aside, and no such Addresses are to be seen in the Offices of our Church.

3dly, ANOTHER Reason why we are and should always remain Protestants, and never suffer ourselves to be seduced unto the Popish Religion, is, because that Religion teaches Men to live in the plain Transgression of the Second Commandment. The Commandment says, *Thou shalt not make to thy self any graven Image, nor the Likeness or Figure of any Thing in the Heavens, or in the Earth; thou shalt not bow down to them,*

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them, nor worship them. In plain Contradiction to this Command, the Papists set up in their Churches the Image of Christ, the Image of the blessed Virgin, the Images of divers Saints, and encourage the People to approach them with all the Marks of religious Veneration and Obeisance, to crouch to, to bow down, and kneel before them, and to pray directly to them, or in and by them, to the Persons they represent. But though we are to pray to God, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, yet we are not in Prayer to bow down and worship their Images, the Commandment being exprefs against it; much less are we to worship the Images of Saints, who being but Creatures, can have no Share in the religious Worship that is paid in the House of God. Were they present themselves to behold the Worship and Devotion paid them in the Popish Churches, they would be ready to say, as the Angel did to St *John*, *See you do it not; we are your Fellow Servants; worship God.* Rev. xxii. 9.

S E C T.

S E C T. XII.

4. **W**E should think ourselves happy in being Protestants, when we consider what great Errors the Papists have fallen into, with relation to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For,

FIRST, As if they might deal with the Ordinance of Christ as they please, they have presumptuously taken away the Use of the Cup from the People, distributing to them a half Communion, admitting them only to eat of the Bread, but not to taste of the Wine: Whereas our Saviour appointed both Bread and Wine to be the Pledges of his dying Love; the one, to signify

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signify his Body broken ; the other, his Blood spilt upon the Cross for our Redemption : He distributed both to his Disciples, and commanded them to do likewise. And his Apostle *St Paul* expressly declares, *That by eating of the Bread, and drinking of the Cup, Christians are to shew forth the Lord's Death.* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

SECONDLY, They teach and make it a Part of their Creed, that the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are truly and substantially in the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper ; and that the whole Substance of the Bread is turn'd into the Body, and the whole Substance of the Wine is turned into the Blood ; which Change is call'd by their Church *Transubstantiation*. So is their Doctrine express'd in the Words of the Creed, establish'd by Pope *Pius IV*, and the Council of *Trent*.

BUT can it possibly be thought, that when our Saviour first instituted this Sacrament, and gave it to his Disciples,

ples, whilst he was yet living, and his Body unbroken, the Bread he gave them was actually a Piece of his Flesh, and the Wine he gave them was a Draught of his Blood? Is it not evident to our Senses, that the Elements remain after Consecration, the very same in Substance as they were before, and that no such Change is wrought upon them? Is the Body of Christ, which long since ascended into Heaven, and is there seated at the right Hand of God; Is (I say) this sacred Body to be called down from Heaven at the Prayer of every Priest, to be broken and mangled, and in a thousand Places at the same Time, to be fed upon by Christians? How monstrous and full of Absurdities is this *Romish* Doctrine? How much more easy and rational is the Opinion of the Protestants, who take our Saviour's Words, *This is my Body*, and *this is my Blood*, to mean no more, than this Bread is to *represent*, or to be a *Memorial* of my Body; this Wine is to *represent*, or to be a *Memorial* of my Blood; take these in
a thank-

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a thankful Remembrance of my Death for you? And as well may it be thought that when our Saviour said, *I am the Vine*, or *I am the Door*, he was actually transformed into those Things, as that such a Change was wrought in the Sacrament he instituted, by Virtue of the above mention'd Expressions, which are to be understood only as a figurative Way of speaking, common in all Languages.

THIRDLY, Another Error of the Papists about this Sacrament is, that they look upon it, and their Creed declares it, to be a true, proper, and propitiatory Sacrifice for the Living and the Dead. That the Sacrament is a Memorial, or Representation of Christ's Sacrifice, of that propitiatory Sacrifice which he made of himself upon the Cross, we, with other Protestants do believe; and that the Service and Duty we perform therein, may be called an *Eucharistical* Sacrifice, or a Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving, we deny not; but to say, it is a real propitiatory

propitiatory Sacrifice, we think very absurd and erroneous. Such a Sacrifice was offer'd but once, namely, when our Lord submitted to die for us, as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. vi. 10. In that he died, he died unto Sin once.* But if it be supposed, that in the holy Communion, Christ's real Flesh and Blood is sacrificed, what is this but to make him die a thousand Times over? contrary to what the Apostle expressly declares in another Place, *Heb. ix. 25, &c.* where he says, that *Christ needed not to offer himself often, as the High Priest enter'd into the holy Place every Year with the Blood of others; for then (says he) must he often have suffer'd since the Foundation of the World; but now once in the End of the World hath he appear'd to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; and as it is appointed unto Men once to die, so Christ was once offered to bear the Sins of many.* Answerably hereto the Church of *England*, in it's Communion Office, openly and truly professes, that Christ Jesus, who suffer'd Death upon the Cross for
our

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our Redemption, *made there, by his one Oblation of himself once offer'd, a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World.*

A COMMEMORATION of this Sacrifice, we Protestants make often; but presume not with the Papists, to sacrifice our Redeemer again in Person.

I MIGHT instance in divers other Particulars, wherein (if the Scripture be the Rule of judging) the Church of *Rome* has certainly erred; and to follow her in her Errors, is too great a Compliment to be paid to that, or any other Church in the World. One Argument indeed they have to silence all Objections: The Church (meaning themselves) has not erred, because it is infallible, and cannot err; which is just the same, as if a Criminal should plead, he is perfectly innocent, because he cannot be guilty: Whereas such is the Depravation of human Nature, that without due Care any Man may
be

be tempted to commit a Crime, and no Man, or Body of Men, are exempted from falling into Errors.

AND because in the Matters under Dispute, the Papists appear to have swerved from the plain Doctrine of the Scriptures, we have Reason to think our selves happy, that we are Members of a Protestant Church, in which nothing is imposed upon our Belief, or enjoined to be done, but what is perfectly agreeable to the holy Scriptures.

ALL that we have need to do, is, together with our Thanks for God's singular Mercies, to take care that our Lives be answerable to the Purity and Excellency of our Religion; that we be not only reformed in our Faith, but in our Manners; and whilst we fly from Popery, we run not into Licentiousness. The Protestant Religion allows no Man to live in the Neglect of his Duty to God, nor in the Commission of any Thing that is evil; but if we

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desire to be the better for the Light we enjoy, we should make it *so to shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*

S E C T. XIII.

THAT we might be able to give a rational Account of our Religion, we have shewn,

FIRST, What Answer is to be made to those who shall ask, Why it is necessary for us to be of any Religion at all?

SECONDLY, It has been shewn, why we are and ought to be of the Christian Religion, rather than of any other that has prevail'd in the World; that is, why we should be Christians, rather than either Jews, Heathens, or Mahometans.

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, There being Divisions amongst Christians; and the most considerable in these Western Parts of the World, being the Protestants and Papists; it has been also shewn, why we should be in the Number of the former, rather than of the latter.

I COME now to resolve the fourth and last Query propos'd, which was this; Because here in *England* the Protestants themselves are of different Minds; some keeping to the establish'd Church, others separating from it; whether we should choose, either to be Church-Men, or Dissenters. Happy it would be for us, if, as we live in a Protestant Nation, we were all of one Mind, and there were no Divisions amongst us; and more united we should be, if we well considered how little Occasion there is for these unfortunate Divisions, and how much the Scripture does condemn them.

I SHALL therefore proceed to shew, why it is necessary for us to be in the Communion of the establish'd Church, rather than be Members of any separate Meeting, or dissenting Congregation whatsoever; and that for the following Reasons,

1. BECAUSE the setting up of Congregations, different from, or contrary to, the Church, is a Thing perfectly needless.

2. BECAUSE it is not only needless, but unlawful, if we are to judge by the Rules of Scripture.

3. UPON the Reasons that this Separation has been made, and is still continued, there can be no such Thing as Unity in the Church of Christ, or in any Christian Nation whatsoever, but religious Divisions must be endless.

4. THIS

4. THIS Departure from the establish'd Church, has been, and is, the Occasion of a World of Evil and Misery to our Nation, and in the End is likely to prove its Ruin.

THESE Things are of great Moment, and deserve well to be considered by all that wish well to their Country. And may we all be disposed to see and pursue the Things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes!

1. IT was observ'd, that the setting up of Congregations, different from, or contrary to, the Church, is a Thing perfectly needless. For as we are all Protestants, and our Nation has long since freed itself from all Subjection to the Pope, and the Errors of Popery, what Occasion is there for any Divisions amongst us? Why should we not all go to the House of God as Friends? Is not the Church of *England* a true Church of Christ? And has it not

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been owned to be the Bulwark of the Protestant Religion? Why then should any who call themselves Protestants, be willing to see it weaken'd or impair'd? Why should any that live under its Shadow, separate themselves from its Communion? Did our Church impose any Thing to be believ'd or done, contrary to the plain Doctrine of the Scriptures, there would be some Reason for People's taking Offence at her, and withdrawing themselves from her Society: But when nothing of this kind can be charged upon her, how needless, how unreasonable is it to divide from her Communion? Does our Church (like that of *Rome*) teach People to fall down and worship Images? Does it offer up any Prayers to Saints or Angels? Does it administer only a half Sacrament to the People? Are our Prayers put up in an unknown Tongue? or the People denied the free Reading of the Scriptures? Are any of these Things done amongst us? Why then should the Order and Service of the Church meet with any Opposition?

Look

Look into the Book of our Common Prayer, and search from one End to the other, whether we make any Supplications to the Virgin *Mary*, or the Saints; whether we present not our Requests only to God in and through the Intercession of Jesus Christ our Saviour: And observe in how becoming a Method the Church Service is disposed; how admirable a Strain of Piety runs through its Prayers; how fully all our Wants, and of all Orders and Degrees of Men, are consider'd; and surely nothing more can be thought needful to answer the Ends and Desires of a Christian Congregation. I may venture to say, that no where in all the Christian World is the Word of God more soundly preach'd, the Sacraments more purely administer'd, the Worship of God more decently celebrated, than in the Church of *England*: And if People were but careful to live as the Church teaches, they need not go any where else, or look out for any other Guide to lead them in the Way to eternal Salvation.

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2. THE setting up of Congregations different from, or contrary to, the Church, is not only needless, but unlawful, if we are to judge by the Rules of Scripture. For the Scripture every where presses Christians to Unity in Religion, and not to run into unnecessary Divisions. Those therefore who depart from the publick Order established in the Church, and draw away Disciples after them, act contrary to the Rules of Scripture, and therefore unlawfully. Observe in how moving a Style St Paul persuades the Christians of those Days to Unity, 1 Cor. i. 10. *Now I beseech you Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same Thing, and that there be no Divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment.* Here he would have them, not only to be of one Faith, to agree in the main Articles of Religion, but, as far as possible, to be of the same Mind and Judgment in all Things,
much

in the Choice of his Religion. 81

much more not to proceed to an open Breach of Church Communion: And whereas some had been observed to be very peevish and contentious, following this or that Teacher, just as their Humour led them, the Apostle tells them, that this was an Argument of a weak and carnal Mind, of a Mind too much under the Power of their sensual and violent Passions: *Whereas, says he, there is among you Envyng, and Strife, and Divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as Men? for while one saith I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?* Contrary hereto he requires in other Places, that Christians should be careful to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, that they should walk by the same Rule, that they should glorify God with one Mind, and one Mouth,* joining unanimously in the same Offices of Prayer and Praise, without dividing Communion, and seeking to glorify God with different Minds, and different Mouths: He puts us in Mind, that *God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace.*—

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And if any, says he, desire to be contentious, we have no such Custom, nor the Churches of God. In a Word, he calls the Church, or the Society of Christian Believers, *the Body of Christ*, and says expressly, *that there should be no Schism in this Body*, 1 Cor. xii. 25. By a Schism is meant a Rent or Disunion amongst the Members: And that there is a Schism or Disunion amongst the Christians of this unhappy Nation, is too plain and melancholy a Truth. But where then lies the Fault? Does it lie on our Side, who hold to the Order establish'd in the Church? or on theirs, who separate from it? We on our Parts abide by that Form of Government and Worship which was settled at the Beginning of the Reformation; and upon those certainly must fall the Charge of the Schism, who upon little and frivolous Pretences break the Peace of the Church, by dividing from its Communion.

IN King *Edward's* Days, and for
some Years in the Reign of Queen
Elizabeth,

Elizabeth, there was no such Thing as an open Separation from the Church. There were some indeed who were not intirely pleased, and were still urging for a farther Reformation; but whatever Scruples they had, they did not think them of that Moment, as to break Communion with the Church about them: And when the Separation first began, and Congregations were set up in Opposition to the Church, the most learned and sensible of the *Puritans* highly blamed those who were for carrying Things to such an Extremity, alledging how dangerous and sinful it was to make a Schism in the Church: And however they wish'd to see some Things altered, yet till it was done by a national and general Act, they held it necessary for all People to keep to the establish'd Rule. Such was the Temper of the old Puritans, as they were call'd.

BUT after them succeeded a Generation of warmer, and more violent Spirits, who not contented with the

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Moderation of their Forefathers, were for altering and unsettling all Things; in which, because they were not gratified, they proceeded to an actual Breach, and set up Congregations in Opposition to the national Church: And thus have Matters continued to this Day.

OUR Brethren therefore that went out from us, and still remain divided from the Church, must not they take the Blame upon themselves? and does not the Guilt of the unhappy Schism in this Protestant Nation, lie at their Doors? It may be said, perhaps, that the several Parties who divide from the Church, do now enjoy a Toleration from the Government: They do so, and may they have it unenvied; and let none of us be of so furious and violent a Spirit, as to desire to see any Christians amongst us cruelly used upon the Account of Religion. In the mean Time Error remains Error still; and if the Laws of Christ condemn the making a Schism or Rent in the Church,

Church, those who are concern'd, must always stand guilty in the Sight of God, be the Laws of Men whatsoever they will.

S E C T. XIV.

THIRDLY, Upon the Reasons that this Separation has been made, and is still continued, there can be no such Thing as Unity in the Church of Christ, or in any Christian Nation whatsoever, but religious Divisions must be endless amongst us. How much it is the Duty of Christians to be at one amongst themselves, and not to make a Rent in *the Body of Christ*, which is *his Church*, has been already seen: But now if the Reasons be good, for which the Separation has been made from the Church of *England*, then I say, that the Apostle's Precepts so earnestly recommending Union, can never be observed, and no national Church

Church can ever enjoy Unity and Peace. For what are the usual Reasons given for departing from, or not conforming to, the establish'd Rule? Not because any false or unsound Doctrines are taught amongst us; not because any Thing is done in the Church, plainly contrary to the Word of God; this they never could, and never will, be able to shew: But they are little inconsiderable Matters, against which Exception has been taken; against the wearing of a Garment; against a mere Ceremony; in which the Church places no Holiness, or absolute Necessity, but enjoins only for Form and Decency's sake: And the usual Pretences in these latter Days have been, that every Man must see with his own Eyes, and every Man is at Liberty to go where he likes best, or where he thinks he may be most edified; and all may choose how or in what Manner they are to serve and worship God.

BUT if these be sufficient Reasons for going into Divisions, how is it possible

fible that Unity in Religion can ever be maintain'd? Let a Church be never so sound in its Faith, let its Worship be never so holy and pure, and every Thing settled in it with the greatest Judgment and Wisdom; yet if every one may follow his own Fancy, and none is obliged to submit to publick Order, what must the Consequence be, but endless Confusion? The general Rule which the Apostles have left for regulating Things in the Church of God, is this; *Let all Things be done decently, and in Order.* But who is to be the Judge of this Order and Decency? Is every private Person fit to judge what is to be done in the House of God? Or is it his Business to settle, or to censure Matters of this kind? Surely those to whom the Care and Government of the Church is committed, must be the proper Judges in the Case: Upon them it lies to see every Thing settled with Order and Decency; and to the Order by them establish'd must the People willingly submit. So does the Apostle require, *Heb. xiii. 17. Obey them*

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them that have the Rule over you ; submit yourselves to such ; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give an Account. Had this Precept been observ'd, and the Governors of the Church been submitted to in what they appointed for Order and Decency, there had been no Divisions about Religion amongst us.

AND 'till People are sensible that 'tis their Duty to submit their own Wisdom to the Wisdom of their Superiors, and that 'tis a Sin to make a Schism in the Church, upon little and frivolous Pretences, our Divisions must needs be endless. For though a new Order and Form of Worship were to be settled in the Church, and though all the Dissenters now living were willing to come into it, in order to become an united Protestant People ; yet the very next Generation might with equal Reason depart from this new Establishment, as their Fathers did from the old one, if every little Scruple or Conceit be sufficient to justify such a De-

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parture ;

parture ; if People have then no better a Sense of the Duty they owe to God's Church, and of the Sinfulness of running into Divisions than they have *now*.

YEA, do we not see, in fact, into how many different Sects and Opinions those, who have gone out from us, have split and subdivided ? Some of one Persuasion, some of another ; some following this Congregation, others following that ; and each particular Sect condemning the other, as they do the Order of the Church ? For indeed how can it be otherwise ? and where can Separation end, if People have no Notion of Christian Unity, if they think themselves not tied to any publick Rule or Appointment ?

AND may not any Member or Members of a dissenting Congregation withdraw themselves from their own Pastor, and set up another Congregation against him upon any little Dislike or Exception, by the same Rule that
himself

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himself has separated from the Church, if every conceited Person be free to follow his own Humour? And thus it happen'd some time ago amongst the Independants of *New England*, where the separating Members fought their Brethren at their own Weapon: For when a Dissention arose among them, and some withdrew from the settled Orders of their Churches, and form'd themselves into a new and separate Congregation, being told by their Brethren how great an Offence they were guilty of in making such a Schism or Division; their Answer was, That by the same Rule they had separated from the Church of *Old England*, themselves had the Liberty to separate from them. So unavoidable, so endless are Divisions, if People have no more Regard to the Unity of the Church.

S E C T.

S E C T. XV.

FOURTHLY, this Departure from the Church has been, and is the Occasion of a World of Evil and Misery to our Nation, and, in the End, is likely to prove its Ruin. Our blessed Saviour has told us in the Gospel, that a Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation: And may we not remember, or have we not heard into what great Desolation this Kingdom was brought, not an Age ago, by our unhappy Differences in Religion; whilst one Party strove to overturn the establish'd Church, the other to preserve it: In which Quarrel one of the best of Princes fell, and in an unheard of Manner was judg'd, condemn'd, and executed by his own Subjects. To avoid the like Fate, his Children were forc'd to fly, and to take Shelter in a foreign Land, where
one

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one of them being perverted to the Popish Religion, and bringing back with him a Disposition to re-establish it in this Nation, what Troubles it occasion'd, and how vast an Expence of Blood and Treasure it has cost the Nation, is too well known. Now had we been (as the Psalmist says of *Jerusalem*,) *a City, or Kingdom, at Unity in itself*, none of these Miseries had happen'd to us, at least we should not have fallen out about Religion. This would never have been used as the Trumpet to War, and the Lord's Cause would never have been the Pretence for all Sorts of Villany: We might have *sat each under his own Vine, and under his own Fig-Tree, and there had been none to make us afraid.*

AND how happy, how exceedingly happy shou'd we now be, if we were but an united People, if, as we are all Protestants, we could *go to the House of God as Friends*, laying aside all Divisions, and walking, as the Apostle speaks,

in the Choice of his Religion. 93

speaks, *by the same Rule, with one Heart and one Mouth glorifying God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Then (in the Words of the Psalmist) *would Glory dwell in our Land; Mercy and Truth would meet together, Righteousness and Peace would kiss each other.* We should have no Occasion of Wrangling and Dispute, of Envy or Contention; and *where Envy and Strife is, says the Apostle, there is Confusion, and every evil Work.* Then our only Emulation would be, who should most excel in Virtue, and best adorn the Church he is Member of; we should have no need to be on the offensive or defensive with each other, but should make it our chief Study *to provoke unto Love, and to good Works.* In a Word, we should be better Neighbours to each other, better Friends, and better Christians.

SUCH happy Days we might wish for, and please ourselves with the Thoughts of; though I must confess, we have little Hopes of seeing them,
whilst

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whilst every one is wedded to his own fond Conceit, and will not see the Duty and Necessity of Church Union.

INSTEAD of the lovely Prospect above describ'd, we have now but a melancholy Scene before our Eyes, a truly primitive and Protestant Church deserted, and spurn'd at by her own Children; themselves jarring and differing with each other, finding Fault with every Thing, and pleas'd with nothing; and by their Peevishness and Folly laying all open to a general Ruin. For if there be any Truth in our Saviour's Words, *a House or Kingdom divided against itself, cannot long stand*; our common Enemy, the Papists, could not wish for more, and are with nothing more pleas'd, than to see us thus disunited, and have been always active and industrious to foment our Divisions, in hopes, that one Day, grown sick and weary of Contention, and being toss'd about with various and wild Opinions, we shall be willing to reunite with them, and be no longer

ger fond of our boasted Reformation.

BUT as we are verily persuaded, that Popery is contrary to the Scriptures, we should be extremely careful how we give them so great an Advantage against us. And whereas the Church of *England* hath been always look'd upon to be the firmest Bulwark against Popery; and none have, in Times of Trial, shewn more Courage or Learning, in the Defence of the Protestant Religion, than the Divines of our Church; let us ever retain a hearty Love and Reverence of it, and think ourselves happy that we are Members thereof; and let none amongst us ever be prevail'd with to look towards, or to join with a Congregation that has been set up in Opposition to the same; remembring that 'tis the Apostle's Advice and Command, *Mark them which cause Divisions among you, and avoid them; for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly, and by good Words and fair Speeches*

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Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple, Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Of this Sort (says St Paul) are they which creep into Houses, and lead captive silly Women, laden with Sins, and led away with divers Lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth, 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7. And in the very next Chapter he shews, how much the Peace of the Church would be in Danger from Mens unreasonable itching after Novelties, warning them to take care, least their own vain and unsteady Minds beguile them into Error. The Time will come (says he) when they will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own Lusts shall they heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears: And they shall turn away their Ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto Fables, 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

THESE Sayings of the Apostles do so plainly reflect upon the Humour and Folly of these latter Times, wherein every Man thinks himself at
Liberty

Liberty to gratify his own itching Ears, and to follow this or that Teacher, as he likes best, that one would think they had been written not an Age since, and that they had been sent by the Apostles, as a Warning to the Christians dwelling in *England*.

S E C T. XVI.

I HAVE now finish'd what I had to say upon the four Questions at first propos'd; from whence every honest *Englishman*, that wishes well to his native Country, may see how he ought to carry himself towards the Church and Government here settled amongst us, and how much he is oblig'd to keep the Church's Peace, and at no Hand to join with those that separate from her.

I SHALL now address my self to all that call themselves Churchmen, who
E make

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make it their Glory to be so accounted, and would not be thought unworthy of so excellent a Name; intreating them to consider the following Things.

FIRST, that our Church allows no Person in any Sort of Vice or Immorality, in any Action or Thing forbidden by the Laws of God. So that though a Man should profess never so great a Love and Honour to the Church, though he should talk never so loudly and earnestly for it; yet if he lives in the Breach of God's Commandments, our Church will not own him for a true Son or Member of her's, and all his blustering Discourse will be of no Advantage to him. We ought, indeed, to be right and sound in our Opinions, to avoid carefully the Errors of those who divide from the Church's Communion: But if we imagine, that because we are Members of the Church, and are, perhaps, warm Sticklers for it, the Sins and Blemishes in our Lives shall be easily overlooked and forgiven,

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in the Choice of his Religion. 99

we shall find ourselves sadly deceived ; it being not in the Power of the best Church in the World to save a wicked Man, that is, one that goes on in a Course of Sin. Be our Profession what it will, and let our Belief be never so right and well-grounded, a bad Life will overthrow all our Hopes.

DOES, therefore, any one that calls himself a Churchman, allow himself in swearing, and cursing, and taking God's Name in vain? Let him know that in this he dishonours the Church he belongs to, and shews himself disobedient to her Instructions, which continually, in her holy Offices, sets before him the Law of God, and tells him plainly, that *God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.*

ARE there any amongst us that yield themselves Slaves to their inordinate Lusts? who live in Whoredom, Adultery, or any sort of Lewdness? or in a State of Marriage not allow'd by the Laws of God? Such Persons, be they,
E 2 of

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of what Church they will, have no Reason to flatter themselves; whilst they repent not, and forsake not their Sin, they stand condemned by the Scripture, and by the Sentence of all Christian Churches in the World.

AGAIN; Does any one that is addicted to immoderate Drinking, think the better of himself because he is a Member of the Church? Let him not be deceived; The Apostle plainly tells him, that *Drunkards, as well as Adulterers and Fornicators, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*: And though he should wish the Church never so well, or drink never so many Healths to its Prosperity, she can promise him no Manner of Safety till he leaves his Excess.

IN a Word, our Church allows no Man in any Kind of Sin or Vice whatsoever; if she did, she would not be a true and pure Church of Christ: Upon his Law she is founded; his Law she teaches and propounds to her People; and

and whosoever will not be obedient to this Law, forfeits all his Interest in the Church, and in the Salvation purchased for it by Jesus our Lord. For we are plainly told, that *He is become the Author of eternal Salvation to them only that obey him.* Consider well therefore the Obligation you are under, as you are Christians, and as you are Members of the Church of *England.*

It has been observed by those who have no great Good Will towards us, and are, perhaps, more curious to observe the Faults of others, than to amend their own; that amongst the Churchmen are found the most Swearers and Prophane. On the other hand, it has been remarked, that amongst the Dissenters are to be found many that will lye and dissemble horribly, and whilst they talk fair, and in a strain of Godliness, will not stick to cheat and to act knavishly. But to what Purpose do such Remarks serve? or which Side is the better by upbraiding each other with their Faults? It should be the Care of all

Christians to avoid every Thing sinful and wicked; and the Laws of Christianity forbid Men, as well to swear and to talk prophanely, as to cheat and play the Hypocrite. As, therefore, no Dissenter will be the more excusable for spying Faults and Blemishes in the Life of a Churchman; so no Churchman will be the better for looking into the Life, and condemning the bad Actions of a Dissenter.

It were heartily to be wished that in a Protestant Nation we had no Dissention about Religion at all, and there were no other Struggle amongst us, but who should be the best Christian. But as we believe, and are persuaded, that our Brethren are extremely in the Wrong, in dividing needlessly from us; and that we are in a much safer Condition, by living in the Unity of the Church, than joining with any that break the Peace of it; we should be extremely careful how we lose the Advantage, and overthrow all our Hopes and Pretensions by acting wickedly.

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We should for the sake of our own Souls, and for the Honour of that Church we profess ourselves of, avoid every Thing immoral and misbecoming, endeavouring (as St Paul did) *to cut off Occasion from them that seek Occasion to defame us:* And, as St Peter advises, *Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak Evil of you, as of Evil-Doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.* But whatever Defects or Failings there may be in particular Persons, they cannot with any Justice be imputed to the Church, which teaches no Man to do Evil, and pronounces Condemnation upon all in general *that work Iniquity.*

S E C T. XVII.

AS our Religion binds us to depart from every evil Way, not to allow ourselves in any sort of Wickedness or Vice;

2. It farther requires us to practise every Thing that is good, and to grow in all Grace and Virtue. For this Reason it is, that our Church has selected the choicest Portions of Scripture, to be continually read in the Ears of her People, that they may see and remember, *What Manner of Persons they ought to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness*, as the Apostle expresses it. And in this you have an Advantage beyond what is commonly found in those Meetings and Congregations, which are set up in Opposition to the Church, where the Reading of the Scripture is not made any Part of their publick Service.

THIS

THIS is flatly contrary to what was antiently done in the Church of God, as we are told, *Acts xv. 21. That Moses of old Time, had in every City them that preached him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath Day.* The Law of Moses was not only preached or expounded upon, but was constantly read in the publick Assemblies. This good Custom we find approved by the Apostles, who themselves were present, and paid their Attention thereto; as we find *Acts xiii. 14, 15.* where it is said of Paul and Barnabas, *That they came to Antioch; and went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and sat down; and after the Reading of the Law and the Prophets, the Rulers of the Synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye Men and Brethren, if ye have any Word of Exhortation for the People, say on.* The Scriptures themselves were first read, then followed the Word of Exhortation; exactly answering to what is done in our Church, and has been the constant Practice of all Christian Churches.

So that we may justly wonder how the reading of the Word of God should be neglected in any Congregation of Christians, except it were to shew, that in this, as well as other Things, some are resolved to be singular. But let who will neglect it, our Church observes the antient Custom, making the Reading of the Scripture a constant Part of her Service; that People might not only depend upon the Word of Man, but on the Word of God itself; and be able thence to make a Judgment of the Instructions that are delivered to them.

ACCORDINGLY in the Psalms, in the Chapters, in the Epistles and Gospels, that are continually read in the Church, we are told, besides what is taught from the Pulpit, how, and in what Manner we should frame our Lives; that we should not only forbear every Thing that is vile and sinful, but be mindful to practise every Thing that is holy and good, *keeping a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men;*
that

that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World. Our Church uses no other Exhortations than such as the Apostles did, and in the like Terms addresses herself to you: Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these Things: Think on them, so as to live and act accordingly. To be a little more particular;

If you would shew your Respect and Love to the Church, you must especially be mindful of your Publick Duties, on which the Honour of God and Religion do so much depend. That Person deserves not the Name of a Churchman, who observes not the Lord's Day and is willing, rather to sit at Home, and be doing nothing, than to appear with his Neighbours at the House of

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God. He or she that, whilst they are able, refuse or neglect to come to the Church, there to join in the publick Worship, is so far from being of the Church Communion, that they voluntarily excommunicate themselves, throwing themselves out of its Society, and by shutting themselves out from Christ's Church on Earth, go the Way to be banished from *the Church of the First-Born written in Heaven*. To live in the Neglect of the publick Worship of God, is to act much worse than either a *Jew*, a *Turk*, or a *Heathen*, who all in their severall Ways express openly the Reverence they have for their Religion. Each of these have their solemn Times and Places appointed for their publick Worship; and whosoever customarily absent themselves from it, are looked upon as vile and profligate Wretches, unworthy of Society. And will not all these rise up in Judgment against too many Christians, who are so hardly to be brought to the House of Prayer, who are so little mindful of the Lord's Day, and leave the Service of
God

God for any little Business or Pleasures of the World? If, therefore, you would be thought good Members of the Church; if, indeed, you have any Value for God, or for your own Souls, have a Care of neglecting your publick Duty, remembring what the Psalmist says, *The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God.*

AMONG other Parts of your publick Duty, let me put you in Mind of one, which though of great Importance, too many are apt to be failing in, even of those, who otherwise seem ready enough to attend on the Service of God; and that is; the receiving of the Sacrament at the Times appointed, or as often as you have convenient Opportunity.

THIS has been always reckon'd a sacred and principal Act of Church-Communion. The being debarr'd from it was ever accounted the greatest Punishment the Church could inflict; and is it not strange that People should be willing to inflict it upon themselves, and
when

when they might come and freely receive the Pledges of Christ's Love, they should unthankfully refuse it? Those who live in any open and scandalous Sin cannot be admitted if they would; but that any should shut themselves out, when there is no such Bar against them, is indeed amazing, and shews that they have very little Sense of what their Religion, and the Church they are of, does require from them.

IF you would shew yourselves Members of the Church, indeed, you must not be backward to join in so solemn an Ordinance of it, and as you would not be excluded from the Lord's Presence hereafter, you must be willing to come to his Table here, and to *do this in Remembrance of him.*

BUT it is not enough that People come to the Church, and shew themselves there for Fashion's sake; they must also mind and be careful to attend to what is there done. We come to the House of God to pay our Worship,

ship, to offer him our Praises and Thanksgivings, for the many Mercies and Benefits we receive from him; to implore his Grace and Blessing upon ourselves and others; to hear his Law read, and to be instructed out of his holy Word. Remember therefore, the good Advice of *Solomon*; *Keep thy Foot when thou goest to the House of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the Sacrifice of Fools; for they consider not that they do Evil*, Eccl. v. 1. To present ourselves before God, and not to heed or to join in the Prayers and Praises that are offered to him, is, indeed, to pay the Sacrifice of Fools, such a lame and defective Sacrifice as will not be accepted. Hear the Sentiments of an honest Heathen on this Point. “ Men (says he) are never
“ more concern’d to be humble and
“ modest, than when they have to do
“ about God. They should enter the
“ Temples with an humble and composed Demeanour: When they approach to sacrifice, it should be with
“ all imaginable Expressions of Reverence,

112 *The Englishman directed*

“rence, and Modesty in their Countenance and Carriage.” How does this reproach too many amongst us Christians, who enter the Church with no Manner of Reverence? who in the Midst of the Prayers, sit irreverently on their Seats, and mind nothing of the Duty they should be paying to God? If, therefore, it was noted for a Fault in the People of *Israel*, that *they drew nigh unto God, and honoured him with their Lips, when their Hearts were far from him*, much greater certainly is the Fault of those, who neither with Heart, nor so much as Lip, are careful to do him Honour, but sit perfectly silent and unconcern’d, and will hardly trouble themselves *to say to the Prayers, Amen.*

WHATEVER the Minister says or does in the Congregation will be of no Benefit to them, who do not go along with him in it. To make it their own Act of Worship, they must join themselves in the same, and the Prayers must be sent up with their own attentive Thoughts

in the Choice of his Religion. 113

Thoughts and Desires, if they would have them effectual to their particular Good. We enjoy by the divine Favour a very becoming and excellent Form of Worship, every Way suited to the glorifying of God, and deriving upon ourselves all Manner of Graces and Blessings; and there is nothing wanting, but to bring along with us religious and devout Minds; which, if we are but careful to do, we shall find sufficient Matter to employ them. And would all People be persuaded to come, and to enter together upon the divine Service, and to join in every Part of it in that Order, with that Devotion, and with those proper Gestures and Marks of Respect, which are required by the Common Prayer Books, it would then be seen that we *worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*; and any one coming in and observing the Decency of our Worship, would be ready to *fall down with us, and would report that God is in us of a Truth.*

bid us rejoice in his love
no gain we are about
S E C T.
motion A

S E C T. XVIII.

IT would also be much for the Honour of our Church, if People would be prevailed with to pay a little more Respect to the Holy-Days, which she has thought proper to be observed, not in too great Numbers, or in Remembrance of mere imaginary Saints, (as is done in the Church of Rome,) but in Honour to our blessed Saviour and his Apostles; and which recur at such proper Intervals and Distances, as not to be very burdensome to us. That Christians should sometimes fast, appears very plain from the Directions of our Lord, how and in what Manner it is to be done: *When ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites.* - - - And if (as far as we are able) we complied with the Fasts of the Church, we should find them very useful towards the subduing our bad Inclinations, towards the weaning our Affections

Affections from the World, and making greater Improvements in Piety and Virtue. Were People as religiously disposed as they ought to be, it is not to be doubted, but many more might find Leisure to attend the Prayers on the Holy-Days, than now commonly do. And, methinks, when we hear how regular the *Papists* are in observing the Orders of their Church, we who profess a better and more pure Religion, should not come behind them in our Piety and Devotion, but should be forward to shew that our Church, as well as theirs, requires from its Members, *All holy Conversation, and Godliness.*

BUT whilst I am recommending a special Care in the Observance of your publick Duties, it is not with an Intention to pass over, or to make you less mindful of what is to be done in private. For both God requires and does expect from us, both a publick and a private Worship; that *we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together,*

116 *The Englishman directed*

gether, (as the Apostle speaks,) in order to yield him the open Testimonies of our Honour and Reverence; and also that we fail not in our daily Acknowledgements to him at Home, in the Duties of the Family and the Closet; taking up and pursuing the worthy Resolution of *Joshua, As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord;* and remembring that Direction of our Saviour, *Enter into thy Closet, and pray to thy heavenly Father in secret.*

No Person that has any Sense of Religion should fail, at least twice in the Day, to bow himself down to God in Prayer, viz. every Morning and every Evening, to bless and praise him for the continual Protections of his Hand, to ask Pardon for his daily Offences and Follies, and to petition his Grace and Blessing upon himself and all that belong to him.

FOR a Man to rise in the Morning, and in the Evening to lay himself down, without taking notice of, or paying any

any Acknowledgment to God his Maker, what is this, but to act like the poor brute Creatures, and to shew himself to have no more Understanding than *the Beasts that perish*? it being by Religion, or a Sense of our Duty to God, that we are properly distinguished from these inferior Creatures. We should rather be inclin'd to have God often in our Thoughts, and to be more frequent in our Addresses to the Throne of Grace, imitating the Example of holy *David*; *At Evening, and at Morning, and at Noon will I pray*: Like to what we read also of the Prophet *Daniel*, who *kneeled upon his Knees three Times a Day, and gave Thanks before his God*, Dan. vi. 10. The Religion and Church we are of, binds us to be mindful of all our publick and private Duties.

AND as we are taught to lead a godly, so also a righteous and a sober Life; to be just and honest in all our Dealings; to injure no Person by Word or Deed; to bear no Malice nor Hatred

tred in our Hearts ; to keep our Hands from Robbing and Stealing ; to keep our Tongues from Evil-speaking, Lying, and Slandering. In like Manner are we required to observe a due Government over ourselves, and to lay a Restraint upon all our Appetites and Desires ; as we are handsomely admonished in our Church Catechism, to keep our Bodies in Temperance, Soberness, and Chastity. Nor must we forget the great Duty of Charity, without which all our Doings are nothing worth, as our Church reminds us in its excellent Collect ; commending to us Charity of all Kinds, relieving the Poor, comforting and aiding the Afflicted, forgiving and praying for our Enemies, forbearing to judge hardly and rigorously of our Neighbour. We should endeavour to possess ourselves of an universal Benevolence and Good-Will towards all ; and tho' we are to follow none in their Errors, we are to refuse to no Person, however differing in Religion from us, Acts of Humanity, Kindness, and Pity. This is the true Spirit of Christianity, and
of

of that excellent Church, whereof we are Members.

By the View we have now taken of what our Religion does require from us, it may be observed, how much People are apt to mistake in building their Hopes upon one or two particular Acts or Branches of Duty. Nothing is more common than for a Man to justify himself, and to appear easy and secure, if he has but carried it fairly and honestly in the World; if when he comes to die, he can but say for himself, I never did any one Harm, but quietly followed my own Business: So far certainly he acted well; but, alas! to be an honest Man is not enough. Many a Turk, many a Heathen, can say so much for himself. The Enquiry here should be, not only whether he be an honest Man, but a good Christian? Has he been constant at the Church, constant at the Sacrament, always mindful of his private Duty to God at Home? Has he lived soberly? Has he been not only just, but charitable,

table, according to his Ability? If he has lived in this Christian Manner, he may then take Comfort in himself, and hope for Mercy and Salvation, in and through the Sufferings and Mediation of his blessed Redeemer, for whose sake God is pleased to overlook the Failings and Imperfections, to which the best of his Servants are liable.

In a Word, to be good Churchmen and good Christians, we must live, not only *righteously*, but *soberly*; and not only *soberly* and *righteously*, but also *godly in this present World*. Then may we chearfully look forward to that *bles- sed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; To whom be Glory and Praise for evermore.*

F I N I S.

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